

JAPANESE RURAL COMMUNITY, "MURA" —CONSIDERED IN THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY—*

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to make the characteristics of the Japanese rural community clear.

In the history of Japanese rural sociology, some attempts to find such characteristics have been undertaken by various researchers.

However, most of them borrowed from foreign scholars, especially European and American. They basically employed or Occidental theory and methodology. If they could find originality, it was only in data collected in Japanese fieldwork or partial revisions of a foreign theoretical framework and methodology.

I believe that true originality should be discovered in Japanese rural society itself.

I

Eitarō Suzuki (1894—1966) established the first systematic rural sociology in Japan. It became the source from which the history of Japanese rural sociology has flowed out. After *Suzuki*, many Japanese rural sociologists would return to his system, over and over again, and from there they began to take new steps. But *Suzuki's* rural sociology was mainly affected by C. J. Galpin's method.

In 1911, Charles Josiah Galpin (1864—1947) wrote a paper titled "The Social Agencies in a Rural Community". The paper was evaluated as a creative paper. At the time he was a pastor. Receiving recognition for creation of the paper, he was engaged as a lecture at the University of Wisconsin.

He began to undertake field work in an area in Warwas County about the topic of business relations. Then, it scaled up the whole county. The result was reported as "The Social Anatomy of an Agricultural Community".¹ This paper was rated high

* Paper published in *Studies and Essays: Behavioral Sciences and Philosophy* No. 5. The Faculty of Letters, Kanazawa University, Kanazawa, Japan, 1984.

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1. in *Wis. AESRB*, 34, Madison, 1915.

See also: C. J. Galpin, *Rural Life*, New York, 1918. Eitarō Suzuki, *Principle of Japanese Rural Sociology* (in Japanese), Tokyo, 1940. Kiyomi Morioka, "Theoretical Development of American Rural Sociology", in *Structural Analysis of the Village Community* (in Japanese), Village Study Society, Tokyo, 1956.

as an epochmaking work.

Why was this recognized as a creative paper? It was attributed that he could find community in the farmers' area in the United States. At that time, American sociologists believed that there was no community in the farmers area. Galpin might seem to have made something come from nothing. It must be a epochmaking achievement that he could find the community. After that, Galpin's method influenced Japanese rural sociological study, too.

Americans believed that since farmers lived scattered over a wide area, they could not find community. Really, today also it would seem that farmers live in a widely dispersed pattern. It is not so strange to think that there is no connection and coordination between one farmer and another. Yet Galpin proved that there existed, certainly, community.

Before Galpin found the community, there was a pilot theory. D. Sanderson indicated that.² It was C. H. Wilson's theory. Wilson said that "country community was range of the area where they could go and return in one day by the carriage. Thus, team haul must be both radius of buying and selling and radius of social contact". But some sociologists ascertained that this Sanderson's indication were not true. That is, they thought that Galpin did not know Wilson's theory.

By the way, there is a problem, if there is only an idea, and it does not go hand in hand with scientific procedure. How about community analysis by Galpin?

When he conducted his field work, first he selected some centers in farmers area. They were as follows:

1. Type of city : having about 2000—3000 population.
2. Type of village : having about 500—3000 population.
3. Type of hamlet : having about 75 population.

He made blank maps of every center and surrounding farmers area.

Second, he relied upon teachers, pastors, school masters, bankers, librarians -- who were considered lay experts -- living in every center to be cooperators. Galpin handed them maps on which were laid down farmers which used these institutions.

Third, Galpin gathered together these maps and laid down in a single map all the farmers who used each of the centers.

Completing this work, he reached the following conclusions:

1. The combination of various service areas was the basic country community.
2. Service areas were not always localized to ranges of such self-governing stem as divisions like block of street, county, state and so on.
3. The commercial service area forms the base. It might be the real range of community.

Galpin, thus, could find community, by scientific procedure, in farmers area in the United States.

Next, this community which Galpin could find existed at the connection of rural and urban areas. So he called it "rural-urban community", or in a simple form,

2. D. Sanderson, *Rural Sociology and Rural Social Organization*, 1942, pp.275-276.

"rurban community".

And more, this method by Galpin to find community was one which used maps. It was the first time maps were used in field work.

Community analysis by Galpin could be said to be one of the most effective methods in field work. And this research strongly affected Japanese rural sociology.

II

The result of *Suzuki's* study was compiled into a volume titled *Nihon Nōson Shakaigaku Genri (Principle of Japanese Rural Sociology)* (Tokyo: Jichō-sha, 1940). Because of this publication *Suzuki* was given the status as founder of Japanese rural sociology.

The important aims of this writing, *Suzuki* himself stated in his volume, was (1.) to establish the scientific method in Japanese rural sociology, and (2.) to grasp the character of Japanese rural society.

Suzuki found the Japanese *mura* (rural community) in his study.

Speaking about his research method, it was adopted from foreign research methods. There extensive methods, quantitative and statistical ones in American rural sociology, and also intensive ones, drawing up on the method of monograph in Le Play House. When he performed field work, C. J. Galpin's method was buried under his research. The framework of *Suzuki's* research method was borrowed from Galpin's.

Beginning to conduct field work, *Suzuki* gathered, as much as possible, data about rural social groups which exist in Japan.

And, next, he classified them as 10 different kinds.

They were

1. Administrative Local Group Municipality (town and village under the municipality),
2. Parish Group (people under the protection of a community deity),
3. Supporter's Group (group of supporters of a temple),
4. Local Team-like Group,

For example :

- a) Religious *Ko*-group - - - - Memorial services for Shinean (Name of a priest of high virtue), Religious association for a pilgrimage to the Ise Shrines.

It is an established theory that the historical origin of all kinds of *Ko*, including entertainment and economic *Ko*-associations were the sermons of Buddhism.

- b) Entertainment *Ko*-group - - - - *Ko* association of knocking off Agricultural Work. (Youths in Village knock off work, drink wine and play making a noise.)

A Full Moon Night *Ko*-association (Farmer's wives in a village assemble on the 15th night of the eighth lunar month, drink wine and play dancing etc.)

- c) Economic *Ko*-group - - - - A mutual financing association. Association of a forest, wasteland and rice-field etc. owned in common. These *Ko*-group can divided by standards of distinction such as sex and occupation, too.
- 5. Neighborhood Group - - - - Group exchanging civilities in daily life. Group borrowing or lending living necessities. Group of mutual-aiding at the times of ceremonies of age, marriage, funeral and ancestral worship. Group of mutual aiding agricultural and other works. C. H. Cooley called it "primary group".
- 6. Economic Group - - - Association of land owned in common. A mutual financing association. A farmers co-operation association.
- 7. Government Organization Group - - - An elementary school, youth school, under old educational system. Youth club and women's youth club under old system. Fire fighting group, women's association in old age.
- 8. Kin Group - - - Kinship group.
- 9. Special Cooperative Interest Group - - - Group utilizing water in common. An irrigation association. A flood defense association. Association for prevention against damage from insects, wind damage, coldweather damage, disease etc. Group praying for rain. Group for torching procession to drive away moxious insects. etc.
- 10. Class Group - - - Association of the land-owning classes. Association of tenant farmers. Cooperating association of the land-owners and tenant farmers.

Next, *Suzuki* showed the state of accumulation of all groups by a diagram. These circle of groups accumulated in trebly as big, middle and small on each area.

The big circle designates the area of the village in current governmental municipality. The middle circle designates the "*buraku* (hamlet)" or "*ōaza* (minor section)" that they called their range of life in common. And the small circle designates the neighborhood group.

Lots of groups, including the most important ones, are accumulated within the middle area.

Moreover, a conscious uniformity controlled farmers living in this area.

So, he indicated these as "Japanese *mura* (Japanese rural community)". He called this hamlet community which he found "*Shizen Son* (Spontaneous Natural Village)". It became the first discovery of Japanese rural community from the sociological point of view.

It is clear that the research method which *Suzuki* used to find the Japanese rural community was borrowed from Galpin.

With this, Japanese rural sociology could a scientific approach to the rural society. However, to tell the truth, he was obliged to prepare another problem for Japanese rural sociology. This was whether or not the Japanese rural community, Japanese *mura*, was grouped in reality. To grasp the character of Japanese rural society, this was the very aim of *Suzuki's* rural sociology, too.

III

Eitarō Suzuki's theory, which I discussed earlier, was criticized from several points of view by Japanese rural sociologists. One of the main comments was that Japanese *mura* which *Suzuki* presented did not have both an historical and a vertical character. It was an assertion that the Japanese *mura* must have these characters since it passed through a feudalistic system and prefeudalistic system. Japanese *mura* must be grasped more three-dimensionally.

Through these criticisms, on the one hand, the Japanese extended family system (*Dozoku-soshiki*) was founded by some rural sociologists. It was a hierarchic system of kinship. And, on the other hand, an examination of Japanese *mura* was begun using the German theory of rural community (*Dorfgemeinde*). The reason why Japanese students of rural community accepted this influence by German theory was that both societies, in Japan and in Germany, passed through a feudalistic system. So, these two societies have a definite similarity with each other.

Max Weber (1864—1920) found the distinctive character of Germanic rural community (*Dorf Gemeinde*) in the point that it consisted of two poles. One pole must be equality (*Gleichheit*), and the other enclosure (*Einschliesung*).³

Karl Marx (1818—1883) stated that the rural community (*Dorfgemeinde*) was formed through communal landholding.⁴ And also, he thought the historical process of the rural community went from the primitive communal organization (*ursprünglich Gemeinschaft*) --- including from the tribe communal organization (*Stammgemeinschaft*) to the aggregate group (*Horde, Hordenwesen*) --- to the agricultural community (*Agrargemeinde*).

Both Weber and Marx, further, classified three types of the rural community (*Dorfgemeinde*).⁵ They were (1.) Asian form, (2.) Classic and Antique form, and (3.) Germanic form. Weber thought of them as every ideal type of the community. And Marx considered them with the framework historical development.

Kazuhiko Sumiya, under the influence of Weber's theory, analyzed the rural community (*Dorfgemeinde*) on the basis of the compulsion to cultivate in the area of the rice field.⁶

3. M. Weber, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Aus den nachgelassenen Vorlesungen*, 1923.

4. K. Marx, *Formen, die Kapitalistischen Produktion vorhergehen*, 1857-58.

5. M. Weber *Ibid.*; K. Marx, *Ibid.*

6. Kazuhiko Sumiya, *The Logic of the Historical Structure of the Village Community*, (in Japanese), Tokyo, 1962.

Hiromichi Yoden ascertained that the hamlet community (*Dorfgemeinde*) was composed because of cooperative management of irrigation in the area of complicated maintenance of rice fields, and that the social control for village life came from the same basis.⁷

As communal landholding, in Japan, we could find, for instance, the forest owned in common, the common, the plain owned in common, the field owned in common in every village. We can find them, even now, in many cases.

In these Japanese rural communities (*Dorfgemeinde*), we could find and still can find now in many cases, communal activities in village life, for example, grass cutting in the forest, tree planting, cutting trees, restoration of irrigation canals, plowing the field, rice-planting, weeding in the rice field, rice reaping, cultivating the farm, planting rice-seedlings, harvesting, and so on. Mostly, these labours were divided equally in every farmer's family. Right is also equality. For instance, they divided in equality the profits received when they sold trees out of the commonly owned forests.

That is not all they had done in common. Their social life, too, was communal. For instance, they held festivals of the tutelary god, village festivals, cooperatively took care of the cemetery, cooperated for funeral ceremonies, and cooperated for annual events like the New Year's holidays and the *Bon* festival. And, at last, they held superstitions, legends and folk tales etc. They had even their dialect in common.

Further, in such rural community (*Dorfgemeinde*) they had common consciousness (we-consciousness, the community sentiment).

As the result, the rural community (*Dorfgemeinde*) is composed by all the above factors; that is, by the common landholding (economic), equality and blockade (social), cooperative life (social), common customs or cultures (cultural) and common consciousness (conscious).

I might be able to compare this rural community (*Dorfgemeinde*) to one building. In such a case, the economic factor is like the foundation, the social factor is the supports, and the conscious factor forms the roof.

IV

I have been researching many rural societies in Japan for thirty years.⁸ Through these case studies, I have picked up the Japanese characteristic in rural community life.

In Japan, the traditional rural community consisted of *ie* (the Japanese family) as a social unit. But, *ie* is no more than an idea added to the family group by Japanese. When such an idea is actualized practically, it appears through *oya's* (parent's) action.

7. Hiromichi Yoden, *The Logical Structure of the Agricultural Village Society*, (in Japanese), Tokyo, 1961.

8. See, for example, Tetsuo Ninomiya, *Sociology of Japanese Rural Society*, (in Japanese), Tokyo, 1967.

The definition of *oya* must include the concept of *ko* (child, children); and in fact without *ko* there could be no *oya*. Therefore, it can be said that the idea of *ie* appeared through relationships between *oya-ko*, too.

The social nucleus of the traditional rural community was *oya*. Supposing that the total system of the community is like a fan, the pivot of the rural community was *oya*.⁹ That is the total system of the community would become certain if it were certain; and in contrast, if it were uncertain, the system would be disorganized. The principle of *oya* or *oya-ko* relationships underlies the system of rural community in Japan.

I could create certain model for rural social system which were woven into farmer's actions in Japanese traditional rural community. It is O Model or O-MYT Model. It is as follows:

O = *Oya-ko* (Parents-children) Action - - - *Oya* and *ko* work and live in Common.

M = *Moyai* (Common) Action - - - Farmers produce and live in common. For instance, they called the forest owned in common as "*moyai-yama* (mountain in common). And also, they worked at lumbering, floating logs downstream, mowing grass for the thatched roof, breaking up the soil and so on, in common.

Y = *Yui* (Tie) Action - - - *Yui* meant labour exchange between farmer and farmer. In a community or neighborhood group, farmers exchanged their labour at the times of rice planting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, hulling and polishing rice, rethatching of roofs, and so on.

T = *Tetsudai* (Help) Action - - - *Tetsudai* meant the custom of mutual help for which there is not always a promised return. The habitual would be done at constructing new houses, and giving assistance during sickness, fires, floods and so on. At such times, although they didn't formally promise previously, farmers who have accepted help before remembered that, and returned their assistance to the other side. This idea was strongly held in common.

If we look at those as Japanese actions in modern times, they must be thought individual actions, basically, in which the individual becomes the unit; that is, actions in common by plural individuals, labour exchange or wage labour between individual and individual. We must have the idea that such actions are mainly composed of what individuals do.

However, the traditional Japanese rural community, *moyai*, *yui*, and *tetsudai* were the three typical institutions in common. The sense of communality was both paramount and primary.

This collective characteristic or groupness was based on the principle of *oya* or *oya-ko* relationship. Therefore, we must more strictly consider about *oya* of *oya-ko*. Since we use Chinese letter "親・子" (*oya-ko*, parents-children), we may be apt to interpret them as if they indicated actual parents and children. But this interpretation

9. Tetsuo Ninomiya, "Principle of *Oya* (Parents) and Village Society: Sociology of Nothingness: Japanese Characteristic in Asia," *International Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 1, India, 1981, pp.88-96.

was not in fact the primary one. Tracing the Japanese origin, we note that there were other words indicating actual *oya* and *ko*, namely, *umino-oya* and *umino-ko* (bearing parents and bearing children).¹⁰ While *oya* and *ko*, on the other hand, indicated head and worker in labour organizations under the clan system. And they involved the meaning of master and servant.

Acompanying the disorganization of the clan system, Kin-groups and labour organizations were no longer in accord with each other. In the stage, they referred to the kin-group as *oya-ko*. Distinct from this, the organization was called *oyakata-kokata* (master and servant). Anyway, we should pay attention to the fact that both kin and actual *oya-ko*, and non-kin and master and servant, *oyakata-kokata* had the same origin.

Now, in the traditional Japanese rural community, *oya* and *ko* were responsible for the structure of the *ie*. Within this *ie*, the family consisting of the *oya* and *ko* was included. In the Japanese traditional rural community, there were many examples of the extended family system.

As a result of social circumstances and family growth the *ko* generally moved away from the *ie*. In Japanese rural society, the eldest son generally succeeded his *oya*. Therefore, though the eldest son remained and succeeded his father, the other children left. The *ko* went away from the *ie* to found a new branch family or to marry an heiress or to marry and join another family. In *Note Peninsula*, for example, *ko* who were away from the *ie* were included in the *oya*'s kinship, as the *ikke* (one family, one *ie*) or *oya-ko*.¹¹ They were included functionally as well as structurally.

As for the *oya*, they expect to be *oya* not only in the family, but also in the village community, just as all people in the village look forward to the birth of a child in any family of the village. This was a kind of fictive *oya-ko* relationship, called *yoboshioya-yoboshigo*, or *ohagurooya-ohagurogo*. These were nothing but habitual attitudes based on the principle of *oya-ko*. However, it is not right to interpret that these fictive relationships were fictive from the actual *oya-ko*, as I have above mentioned.

In the villages of *Noto Peninsula*, Generally, heads of family were called "*Oyassan*" (Mr. *Oya*, Mr. Parents or Mr. Father). If he were not called so, he would not be considered a respected member of the village community. Among the *oyassans* in *Noto Peninsula*, there existed much stratification. In the neighborhood group, *kumi*, it was decided and classified which *ie* would become *oya* and which *ie* would become *ko*. In some villages. There were *sō-oya* as the original parents. Its head was called "*Danna*" (Master or Sir) in the village. For a long time, this *sō-oya*'s family and the old and direct branch family used to have the highest status in the village. Thus, the village was constituted of the *sō-oya* and the other villagers as *ko*.¹²

10. Kunio Yanagida, "*Oyakata-kokata*" (Master-servant), in *The Standard Edition: Collected Works of Kunio Yanagida*, (in Japanese) Vol. 15, Tokyo, pp.370-390., "*Oya to rōdō* (Parents and Labour), in *ibid*, pp.234-252.

11. Tetsuo Ninomiya, "Social Structure of the Japanese Family, *Ie* and the Village in *Note Peninsula*", *Study of Village Society* (in Japanese), No.11, pp.123-158.

12. Tetsuo Ninomiya, *ibid*.

As I have shown, the social system of Japanese traditional rural community was controlled by the principle of *oya* or *oya-ko* relationship. *Oya* was the pivot of the fan-like rural social system. Of course this *oya* contains the original significance of both *oya-ko* and *uminooya-uminoko*. Nowadays, however, the significance of kin and actual *oya* has come to the fore, instead of the original meaning. And also, both kin and non-kin relationships overlap with each other. So, we can not say strictly that it is wrong.

I believe that the essentially Japanese characteristic of rural community life must exist in the principle of *oya* and *oya-ko* relationships and its controlling influence in the rural community. Above all, the fictive *oya-ko* relationship must be unique in the world, from the point of view of International Comparative Study of Sociology.

Communal life in Japanese traditional rural community originated in this principle of *oya* or *oya-ko* relationship. Furthermore, the characteristics of harmony, irrationality, accommodation, permission, groupness (collectiveness) and totality and so on were based to this principle, too. Thus, the Japanese traditional rural community should be said to be a communal society which was controlled by *oya* as the pivot.